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SPANISH LITERATURE.

GUSTAVO ADOLFO BECQUER, *Legends, Tales and Poems*, edited with Introduction, Notes and Vocabulary by EVERETT WARD OLMSTED, Ph. D. Boston: Ginn and Co., 1908.

Nothing but praise can be due to Professor Olmsted for his selections from the prose and poetical remains of the lamented Becquer. Those who have known and loved Becquer in the Spanish three volume edition of 1898, will rejoice that he has found in America such a sympathetic and painstaking editor.

Professor Olmsted has given in this edition far more than we are accustomed to find or to demand in Spanish text-books. If we are not mistaken, his life of Becquer contains more reliable information than was anywhere accessible heretofore; his notes on Spanish prosody are more detailed than any we know in English except Dr. Ford's remarks on the same subject in *A Spanish Anthology*; his literary and explanatory notes on the text betray a range of reading and an alertness of observation which make of this volume a model from the literary standpoint.

The fact is that we are here dealing with genuine artistic literature in a Spanish text-book for almost the first time. Whatever else may be said in favor of the novelists, dramatists and short-story writers whose works have been adopted in our schools, they do not appeal to us primarily as artists. Becquer is an artist and a poet. To have treated him with other than respect and appreciation would have been a sacrilege. We must congratulate the editor upon the consecration which he has brought to his task, and the publishers upon the perfection of the book as a model of typography.

The editor states in his Preface that the text may be used in first or second year work. We should suppose that the vocabulary was so large and the style so literary as to preclude its use in the first year. Many teachers will agree that "fondness for good literature should be stimulated from the very first," and will yet continue to use for elementary work texts which make less demand upon the intellectual

appreciation of the pupil. The constantly recurring notes on prosody will not interest undergraduates, if we know them. We may be wrong, but we hold that the literary appreciation of a given lyric is not a whit increased when we are told that "this poem is made up of alternate decasyllabic anapests and dodecasyllabic amphibrachs." That is indeed Greek and will remain such to those who use the book. On the other hand, we believe thoroughly in the editor's novel efforts to cultivate in the student the habit of making his own literary comparisons with other foreign authors. The notes, moreover, are very full on all matters dealing with the religion, history and geography of Spain. In some of them, stiff quotations from Baedeker and the *Century Dictionary* seem of exaggerated length, and we think the editor could himself have worded the note more concisely. The bare mention of a town or province does not call for a paragraph of history with dates and present population, though we confess to having read these notes with interest and profit. The statement that Palestine is "a territory in the southern part of Syria,—chief city Jerusalem" does not seem to leave much to the originality of the student. But perhaps Professor Olmsted, like others of us, has not yet sounded the depths of undergraduate ignorance! We have, however, no controversy to find with notes which contain so much information worth having, except with the note on the *trobadores* (p. 31) which is inaccurate. It cannot be said of the troubadours that "belief in the marvelous, and hence in fairies, likewise characterized these poets." It is likely Becquer meant nothing more in the text than "popular ballad singers."

This edition consists of ten of Becquer's prose tales dealing with the legends, traditions and art of the Spanish provinces, and of some thirty pages of lyric verse among the most appealing in Spanish literature. That the edition marks a great advance in scholarship and typography is certain. Teachers must decide for themselves whether the text with its prevailing use of literary and artistic words rather than of the words of everyday speech

is what they want for their classes. Where Spanish literature is taught *per se*, and by all lovers of careful editing, Professor Olmsted's work will be welcomed and admired.

A fairly careful reading of the entire text has revealed but the following dropped accents:

P. 40, l. 26, *agazapose* for *agazapóse*.

P. 57, l. 8, *que* for *qué*.

P. 103, l. 19, *esta* for *está*.

P. 110, l. 16, *magnifico* for *magnífico*.

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FABLE LITERATURE.

SNARELY, G. E. : *Æsopic Fables in the Miroir Historial of Jehan de Vignay*. Baltimore: J. H. Furst Company, 1908. Johns Hopkins Diss.

This dissertation is only a portion of a more important work, a critical text of twenty-nine Æsopic fables taken from Jehan de Vignay's translation into Old French of Vincent de Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale*. The dissertation as at present published comprises a biographical notice, an account of the translator's literary work, the influence of his writings upon English literature, the Latin source of the fables, and a description of the manuscripts.

Jehan de Vignay, that "industrious translator and very mediocre writer," as he is characterized by Paul Meyer, has received scant attention from the historians of literature. Most content themselves with the mere mention of his name and of a few of his works. Few facts concerning his life are known; but meager as these are, they have never before been fully brought together. The best previous account of Jehan de Vignay is that offered by Paul Meyer,¹ who says of this translator: "*moins heureux que Nicole Oresme ou que Pierre Bessuire, qu'il a précédés, il attend encore sa biographie, qui pourtant offrirait une matière assez neuve à des recherches intéressantes.*" Mr.

Snarely, although he has collected more biographical facts than any one of his predecessors, has failed to give us anything like the definitive biography for which M. Meyer longs. Mr. Snarely has doubtless gleaned all that one can readily find in the way of biographical data from Jehan de Vignay's own works, but as these consist mostly of translations they naturally afford little information. It is probable that only diligent search among the archives will produce the material required.

The main facts that we know concerning Jehan de Vignay are these: He was born in Normandy near Bayeux, about 1275 according to Mr. Snarely's estimate. He belonged to the order of Saint Jacques du Hault Pas, and as early as 1298 was a professor at Dijon. In 1318 he was acquitted of a charge of murder. Later he seems to have filled an ecclesiastical position in Rouen, and he died in all probability in 1348. His connection with the house of Valois was very close. Most of his work was done at the command of Jeanne de Bourgogne and her husband Philippe VI.

Mr. Snarely, basing his opinion upon internal evidence, identifies this Jehan de Vignay with the like-named author of two Latin treatises: *Margarita Philosophiarum* and *Glossa in Doctrinale Alexandri de Villedieu*. Aside from these original works, Jehan de Vignay is the author of twelve translations, of which the most interesting are the *Miroir Historial* of Vincent de Beauvais, the *Chronique* of Robert Primat, the *Legende Doree* of Jacques de Varazze (Jacobus de Voragine), and *Le Livre des Eschez* of Jacques de Cessoles. The two last-mentioned works interest the student of English literature in that they were the originals of two of Caxton's well-known translations. Mr. Snarely discusses separately each of the translations, and also devotes a special chapter to the Caxton editions. In his preface he tells us that he has been able to list as many as 132 manuscripts of Jehan de Vignay, but unfortunately this list is not yet published. Throughout the dissertation there are constant references to an appendix to be published later with the text of the fables.

In a chapter devoted to sources we are told that Jehan de Vignay's fables are all taken from Vincent de Beauvais; but no attempt is made to trace

¹ *Les anciens traducteurs français de Végèce, Rom.*, vol. xxv. See especially pp. 406-408.